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July 14, 2019

We are writing about the recent decision that reversed the May 24, 2019 determination by the Administration to *close* nine Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers and *transfer* sixteen others to the Department of Labor.

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) is a national nonprofit membership organization that represents thousands of Forest Service retirees who are dedicated to sustaining the heritage of and caring for the National Forests and Grasslands, and partnering with the Forest Service to better understand and adapt to America's natural resource management challenges.

We believe the reversal of this decision was the right choice for several reasons. Forest Service leadership in carrying out the Job Corps program, partnering with the Department of Labor, has been a cornerstone of the program's success over the last five decades. The Forest Service emphasizes "conservation". The importance of these Centers is based on their special rural locations and communities and the ability to connect students with the outdoors. Involving them in conservation work and training is critical.

The loss of these Centers would have been another blow to rural America, not only from economic losses due to lost jobs and the disruption of community stability, but also because of the loss of the training opportunity for at-risk youth in these areas. Further, the negative unintended consequences regarding the disruption of facilities, property ownership, budgets, and other investments that have been developed over the past fifty years would have interfered with the sustainability goals of both the Forest Service and surrounding towns and communities.

The importance of the part of the Job Corps program that is administered by the Forest Service cannot be overstated. With students learning about natural resource management, protection and wise use, they play a vital role in the core mission of the agency while shaping a new life and becoming good citizens. In the future, expanded management of America's forests remains fundamental to help reduce the size and intensity of wildfires to protect people's lives, property, and communities. As you know, this issue is the natural resource conservation issue of our time. The decision to sustain the 25 Job Corps Centers within the leadership of the US Forest Service was an important piece of this larger goal. It will be important to assure this decision is not changed again.

Sincerely,

James L. Caswell
James L. Caswell, Chair